



Community Health Improvement Process

**2014-2015 Community Health Needs Assessment
Community Conversation with
Asian American Health Initiative Steering Committee
August 11, 2015**

Introduction

Healthy Montgomery hosted a community conversation on health and well-being in partnership with the Asian American Health Initiative Steering Committee on Tuesday, August 11, 2015. The conversation took place from 6:00 to 8:00 pm in Rockville, MD. There approximately 23 participants from the steering committee. The conversation was facilitated by Nancy Martin.

The community conversation included a discussion of what is meant by health and well-being at the individual and community levels, elements of a healthy community, community assets and challenges in Montgomery County, and practical steps to improve the health and well-being of the community. Participants engaged in one large group discussion, and were also offered the opportunity to contribute comments and feedback regarding the meeting in writing.

Defining Health and Well-Being

The group began its discussion by defining “healthy” for an individual. The group description emphasized well-being of body and mind, access to services and an environment conducive to health. The group then worked to describe a health community, emphasizing: a safe and secure environment, with access to affordable and high quality healthcare; clean air and water, barrier-free and ethnically and linguistically diverse services, parks and recreation facilities, homeless shelters and food banks, transportation services, and the political process. The group also emphasized the importance of equity, fairness, inclusivity, trust among community members, and sense of belonging and togetherness to a community’s health.

Assets that Support Health and Well-Being

Participants discussed community opportunities and assets of Montgomery County that allow for health and well-being, emphasizing the strengths detailed below.

Montgomery County is a well-resourced community in a context conducive to residents’ health and well-being.

- Montgomery County has a relatively high HHS budget.
- Area public transportation is very good.
- Montgomery County is racially and ethnically diverse.
- Montgomery County is part of a region with top-notch health care for senior citizen.



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- Montgomery County is part of a region with one of the largest number of physicians.
- Montgomery County residents are, on average, highly educated.
- Montgomery County is one of the wealthiest counties in the country.

Montgomery County offers high-quality programming and services and encourages citizen participation.

- Montgomery County hosts frequent health events targeting specific communities.
- Montgomery County subsidizes community clinics.
- Montgomery County offers the Montgomery Care for Kids Program
- Montgomery County has high quality schools for children and adults.
- Montgomery County has offices focused on Asian American, Latino, and African American residents.
- Montgomery County places a lot of emphasis on pedestrian safety,
- Montgomery County offers domestic violence and child abuse services.
- Montgomery County takes part in sister city programs.
- Montgomery County has an efficient recycling program.
- Montgomery County offers well-advertised, high-quality recreational programs for adults and children, including programming in a variety of languages.
- Montgomery County's offices and agencies are very responsive to residents.

Barriers to Health and Well-Being

Participants discussed obstacles to optimal health and well-being in Montgomery County, emphasizing the challenges detailed below.

Despite having many resources, Montgomery County and the surrounding Metropolitan area are challenging places to live.

- Montgomery County is an expensive place to live.
- Because area incomes are, on average, relatively high, income cut-offs leave many residents ineligible for much-needed services.
- The County and surrounding Metro area have very congested traffic, contributing to poor air quality and stress.
- The diversity of the area demands more resources, making it harder for Montgomery County to meet residents' needs.
- Despite being well-resourced, Montgomery County currently faces potential budget cuts.

Montgomery County could do more to address some fundamental challenges for residents.

- Montgomery County has an aging infrastructure.
- County recreational facilities do not receive the upkeep they need.



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- The County could better support residents and medical professionals dealing with the implementation challenges of the Affordable Care Act and, more generally, with navigating health insurance enrollment, coverage, and utilization.
- Dental care is not affordable for Montgomery County residents.
- Montgomery County should provide better mental health outreach and resources to the Asian community that specifically address cultural and linguistic barriers and high suicide rates.
- Montgomery County's domestic violence services focus heavily on individual families and perhaps should increase focus on community-level interventions.

Practical Steps to Improve Health and Well-Being

Participants worked to identify specific actions they recommend the County take to improve the health and well-being of the community, including the priorities and other practical suggestions discussed below.

PRIORITIES (mentioned or "voted for" by numerous participants)

1. Ensure all Montgomery County materials are translated into major Asian languages.
2. Strengthen and build on the County's existing and successful patient navigation system. Recruit and train more minority health navigators, with an emphasis on addressing language barriers enrollment and benefit utilization.
3. Increase funding for minority health care, with an emphasis on comprehensive and mental health care.
4. Create a domestic violence resource program that is more culturally conducive to all communities in the County and that offers legal aid consultations.
5. Work to centralize information on health insurance and benefits (including prescription drug coverage) in a user-friendly, step-wise format that answers frequently asked questions and helps consumers and their advocates to understand and utilize health benefits.
6. Fill the gaps in the County's data collection methods by improving recruitment and survey methods.

OTHER PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS (Not "voted" as top priorities)

1. Increase health and wellness services for the County's elderly population.



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2. Improve the culture of prevention and preventive care.
 - Increase access to screenings.
 - Increase funding for preventive care.
 - Increase education on health issues and diseases.
 - Utilize health promoters to mobilize the community toward preventive care.
3. Consider a public campaign featuring testimonials by people with mental health problems.
4. Restore and maintain funding for existing successful programs and services.
5. Work to reduce any “red tape” residents face when attempting to access County resources.

Community Conversation Feedback

Participants were provided an opportunity to give written feedback about the meeting. In a short closeout survey, participants were asked, “Is there anything else that you want us to know, including what you like or did not like about this community conversation?” Their comments are provided below.

“The community conversation was interesting and fruitful. Want to hear how this conversation was passed to the (Healthy Montgomery) Steering Committee and the impact made in the end.”

“Increase access to insurance coverage. If people can afford the medications, etc. they will take them and improve their health.”

“Great conversation! Specifics of needs and work to be done is clearer for me now. Hoping for minorities to have a healthier life style.”

“Liked that it was very detailed. Lady (facilitator) was patient and understanding but kept on track about the suggestions.”

“Good conversation.”

“Dental care for low income uninsured. (There are) increased resources in the county, stop renovating (and using) funds of county and allocate fund to health care instead of decreasing (services).”